

3-19-2016

Oral History of Eddie Lee Webster, Jr. (Part 1 of 2)

Eddie Lee Webster Jr.

Chet Bush
University of Mississippi

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/cssc_interviews



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [Oral History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Webster, Eddie Lee Jr. and Bush, Chet, "Oral History of Eddie Lee Webster, Jr. (Part 1 of 2)" (2016). *Oral History Interviews*. 3.

https://egrove.olemiss.edu/cssc_interviews/3

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral History Projects at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral History Interviews by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

Oral History of Eddie Lee Webster, Jr.
Part 1 of 2
March 19, 2016

Interviewee: Eddie Lee Webster, Jr.
Interviewer: Chet Bush
Location: Marks, Mississippi
Length: approximately 1 hour and 29 minutes

Eddie Lee Webster, Jr. is a resident of Marks, MS in Quitman County who participated in the 1968 Poor People's Campaign sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

As a youth, Webster worked closely with local efforts to advocate for the poor by engaging with the local Youth Commission Office sponsored by the SCLC. He speaks of Rev. Ralph Abernathy as his inspiration to join the cause. At sixteen years of age he was named the Vice President of the Youth Commission and engaged in Quitman County public demonstrations to bring awareness to poverty conditions in the area. He shares about his responsibility to gather local support for the courthouse marches from among students at the High School. Webster describes the marches through town that culminated on the Quitman County Courthouse lawn.

Webster joined the ranks of the Mule Train caravan that journeyed from Marks, MS to Washington, D.C. during May and June of 1968. Webster described Martin Luther King, Jr.'s involvement in the project but his memory confuses some chronology of Dr. King's engagement.

He spoke of his personal free-spirited motivations to get away from home, while recognizing the importance of the highly-coordinated efforts of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to advocate for the poor. Webster gives first-hand account of his experiences as a driver for one of the mule-drawn wagons that trekked through the South. He enjoyed the receptions at each stop along the Mule Train journey, and particularly benefited from the relationships he made with the variety of people who supported the demonstration.

He recounts the struggles and the joys that the team encountered on the journey, telling stories about significant stops along the way that include Duck Hill, MS where his wagon lost a wheel, Birmingham, AL where they visited Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, and the troubles they encountered with the law at the Alabama / Georgia state line.

He discusses his experience at Resurrection City in Washington, D.C. where the journey culminated with a rousing assembly, but was quickly and heavy-handedly dispersed by law enforcement.

Webster reflects on his upbringing in the cotton fields and reminisces about his childhood. He gives his impressions on poverty and shares personal sentiments about current society. He discusses racial tension and laments that many changes we see today are negative rather than

positive. Webster emphasizes how one can will oneself out of poverty, but later stresses the importance of a good education for overcoming poverty.

The interview returns to the marches on the Quitman County Courthouse lawn and the scattering of the demonstrators when the police became violent. As the interview closes Webster celebrates to have witnessed the first black president and believes we may soon see a woman president.